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INTRODUCTION

[Betta Fish](#) (Siamese Fighting Fish / Betta Splendens) are one of the most popular fish in the aquarium hobby. Unfortunately, this is taken advantage of by the pet fish industry. Bettas are often marketed as low, no maintenance fish that can be kept in small bowls. This however, is very misleading and untrue.

Is true that bettas are indeed one of the easiest fish to keep in the aquarium hobby. However, no matter how "easy" they are to care for, bettas still need the basics, like basic equipment for keeping tropical fish: heater, water, food and care. You will learn about all of these in this ebook and much more.

But first of all, you need to learn how to pick the best betta fish possible from the pet store. Here are some things to look for...

PICKING YOUR NEW BETTA FISH PET

How to pick your betta fish

[Look at the color](#). Is the betta's color bright and vivid, or is it very dull and pale? Bettas come in a variety of colors, but [blues and reds](#) (dark colors in general) are most common.

- Does the betta respond to your movement at all? Does it swim around rapidly when seeing you, or does it merely sit at the bottom and sulk? Do not repeatedly tap the container, as doing so agitates the fish. Instead, try moving your finger back and forth in front of the betta. Do not be afraid to buy a somewhat docile betta though; they generally have many encounters with other people during their day, and may simply be resting. The average betta bought in a pet store has been bred to withstand many of the hassles of a pet's lifestyle.
- Are its fins in good condition, or are they torn or otherwise damaged? Are the betta's eyes in good shape? Do you see any odd lumps (parasites) on its body? If you see anything highly out of the ordinary, consider another betta.
- Sometimes, the fish will choose you, not the other way around. If there is one betta that you look at, set down, move on from it, but are drawn back to it repeatedly, consider buying it. Even if it is not completely healthy, buy the fish you feel connected to, rather than the healthiest one there. He will likely heal up once out of the tiny cup and gets a fresh start in warm, clean water.

HOUSING

It is important to have a proper set up ready, *before* bringing home your new betta fish pet.

Aquarium

Choose a [suitable home](#). In the wild, bettas are suited to living in relatively shallow but spacious environments. To meet the spacious need, consider giving your betta a decently sized aquarium tank to help prolong its life. Pick a tank of 5 gallons or more for your betta to live in. It may seem like a lot, but it is what your betta fish pet deserves.

Other necessary equipment

Various [equipment](#) is required for the successful keeping of betta fish. Here is the list:

- Purchase a heater with a thermostat—betta fish like water temperatures between 76-82°F/24-27°C. Bettas may require a heater in some cases—for example, if you live in a cold country or if you have an aquarium below room temperature, then a heater is required. Mini-heaters are available for betta tanks between 1-3 gallons. During the winter, you may want to add a mini heater or place your aquarium close to a radiator (1 meter away), to prevent your betta from becoming too cold.
- Filters are always necessary but make sure the current is not too strong for your betta. Bear in mind that the long-finned varieties do best with as little current as possible. Some experts recommend the use of sponge filters, to protect the fins.
- Avoid jagged rocks or decorations. Such decorations can easily tear betta fins. It is recommended that you check once a day that there are no tears in the betta's fins. If there are tears, first check the water quality, as tears are typically caused by poor water maintenance.
- Avoid adding any hard plastic plants. Again, these can be rough on the fins. Use the 'pantyhose test': If a plastic plant will snag a pair of pantyhose when rubbed against it, then it will damage your betta's fins. Be safe and buy silk plants instead.
- Live plants are a great idea. They are prettier than fake ones, and betta fish love lounging on the leaves and hiding in them to sleep. Live plants also help to oxygenate the water and keep the water cleaner for longer periods of time.

Prepare the water

Use a [water conditioner](#) such as Prime before putting fresh tap water in the tank. The chlorine and chloramines in standard tap water can harm bettas, as well as kill off all that beneficial bacteria housed in the filter. Older sources may suggest aging the water (standing it for a time) but it is best to use a water conditioner, as aged water removes chlorine but not chloramine and heavy metals.

- It is not a good idea to use bottled water because this deprives your betta of necessary minerals and is not fish 'safe'. Treated tap water is both a cheaper and better alternative.

Fill the betta's tank

If the tank is without a top cover, fill it about 80% high to ensure your fish will not leap out. Bettas are very active and can jump over 3 inches/7.5cm when motivated! However, bettas usually won't be trying to escape if they are happy in their home.

Add your betta to the tank

Slowly and carefully, tip the container in which you received your betta into the new habitat, allowing the new water and old water to mix. This will make the water easier for your fish to adjust to. If the [habitat water](#) is much colder or warmer than the previous water, mixing waters will help allay any shock for the fish. Be gentle as you tip in the betta!

- Avoid netting a betta when possible, as this can damage the delicate fins. If you need to pick up a betta, try to use a small cup to scoop him/her up with care.

Keeping the betta tank clean

Betta fish are only hardy to different water types, such as hard and soft water. This means that you should not change the water or rearrange the aquarium too frequently.

Clean your betta's tank

Place your betta in container filled with old water while washing the tank. Simply wash the tank with hot water, as some soaps will harm your betta. If your habitat has rocks, rinse them thoroughly. Fill the habitat half way with fresh tap water, return the betta and some of the old water, and then fill the rest with tap water again.

- Be sure to add a de-chlorinator (also known as a water conditioner) to the water; this will remove any harmful chlorine/chloramine that is in tap water that may kill your fish. It will also filter bacteria.
- Be sure that the water you are changing is the same temperature as the old water the betta was in, to avoid temperature shock; such shock can be deadly to your betta. Use an in-tank thermometer to check the water temperatures.

Test the water weekly

In order to test water parameters each week, you will need a master fresh water test kit. This will allow you to monitor your aquarium and take readings. Follow the instructions for testing provided by the manufacturer.

- Place notes in your calendar or diary to remind yourself that it's time to test the water.

BETTA COMPATIBILITY

Keep male bettas separated

It is most recommended to keep all [males separated](#), to avoid injuries and death. Injuries can lead to infections, which is not what you want to deal with. If you feel the urge to get another betta (as we all have), make sure to be ready. Either have a tank on hand already, or buy a tank while buying the fish. Remember these fellas need heaters!

I have heard of some people having males together - often [siblings](#) - however they have larger tanks, often long VS regular or tall, and those tanks are cycled, planted, and have natural

sight dividers such as driftwood, or taller plants. These tanks are set up much like a larger sorority tank, but can be more difficult.

If you are keeping males together undivided, expect fighting, showing off, torn fins, and in extreme cases severe injury, lethargy, and death. When the immune system crashes problems such as Ich and Columnaris can hit. Then that means you need to medicate TWO fish.

This is a pretty common way of using one tank for more than one betta. Dividing a tank is the safe route, as long as you still provide enough cover for them. Some males will still become stressed, which can be seen in their behaviour, or even physically. Example: Tail biting, or lethargy.

At first the males will flare a lot at each other, then eventually flare to communicate, or completely ignore each other. Make sure to keep up with your weekly water changes!

Make sure to also keep the water level lower (3 inches or so) to avoid one of them jumping over the divider. This can become more dangerous since it is now half the space, and they will probably be right up in each other's face. Expect torn fins, or even injury. Worst case scenario: Death.

Female betta and male betta

This is another method most un-recommended, especially to new hobbyists. Betta fish emit a scent, as if to say "Hello! This is me!". Males and females both have different scents, due to gender, which makes their presence known.

Keeping them together in an undivided tank can cause some problems. They may breed, they may not. This can cause stress on one or the other, or both.

The female may become: lethargic, sick, egg bound. She may also clamp up and hide, or become the dominant one and harass your male.

The male may become: Stressed, frustrated, lethargic. He may also show these signs through tail biting, clamping up, or become more violent than you have ever seen your seemingly passive male.

Such cases can cause illness and death.

If this method is attempted, a large tank is recommended - once again preferably long VS regular or tall. Stuffing the tank full of live and silk or fabric plants, and tons of hiding spots would be recommended. A heated cycled tank, plus proper husbandry, can make it possible for the fish to live in peace. Please remember every betta is different. Not all will accept this odd change.

Also let it be known, if they breed... The male will keep his nest safe by fending off the female. This may include KILLING her.

Female betta and male betta divided

Dividing a tank ensures the safety of both your fish. Though the scent of both genders is still present, they are at least safe. If you can, have the tank cycled (filter required) to help. Proper husbandry will also be a must. Have enough coverage and hiding spots, so that they do not see each other all the time.

The female can still become stressed, and the male as well. Not all bettas are okay with this particular set up. Know your betta!

Also remember to keep the water 3 or so inches below the divider line.

Female betta and female betta

Keeping two females together is not okay. For females, they need to establish a hierarchy. If there is only two, there leaves one as alpha and the other as the weaker female. To even out aggression and avoid illness, injury or death, it is recommended to have 4+ females together in a tank that is stuffed with live, silk and fabric plants plus hiding spots. 10 gallon is the smallest tank recommended, plus having the tank cycled can help you out a lot. Proper husbandry is still needed (as it is with any fish, any set up). Some females will be very very aggressive... And may not be able to live in a sorority. If that happens, make sure to have a back up ready.

Make sure to quarantine all new fish for two weeks. If you introduce a seemingly healthy female, who has for example... Columnaris... now your whole tank has it, everyone has to be quarantined, and you run the risk of losing your whole sorority.

If you have a pretty barren tank with females, you run the risk of lethargy, illness, injuries and death. I've seen female bettas gang up on another female. Having enough cover, ensures your tank can remain peaceful, and healthy.

If you're considering adding tank-mates, do your research. Betta fish tend to prefer being alone and may kill other fish and even snails if added to the tank. Some people believe that betta fish are good with tank-mates such as snails, ghost or cherry shrimp and neon tetras, and consider that as long as the fish sharing the tank is not bigger, more colorful or fin nipping, it should be okay. That said, some of the more aggressive betta fish simply prefer to be alone and will attack even a snail. Before adding any sort of tank-mate, do thorough research by asking questions of the retailer, reading in books about betta fish or checking online sites dedicated to betta fish (ask other betta owners in the forums). If in doubt, leave the tank-mate out.

- Male betta fish cannot live with other male betta fish. They are named Siamese fighting fish for a reason! In an aquarium setting, they will fight to the death in order to protect their living space, regardless of the size of the tank. If your tank does not have a partition, do not risk losing one or both of your betta fish by allowing them to live together.
- Keep female betta fish either singly or in groups of at least five, to lessen any aggression. The tank must be at least 10 gallons and have several hiding spots if keeping multiple females. All females must be added at the same time. Don't place

only two female betta fish in your tank. They establish a "pecking order" and having only two female fish means that the less dominant one gets picked on exclusively.

- Female betta fish will fight males and vice versa. Don't put them in together. Read up on breeding them if you think you want to try it, but remember that breeding bettas is a huge commitment, and not something to be taken lightly.
- Putting a mirror up to the side of the tank can cause a betta to flare because he/she thinks that there is a rival in his/her territory. This can stress out the fish, so avoid mirrors.

FEEDING THE BETTA

Feed your betta

Your betta's diet should consist primarily of pellets specifically made for feeding betta. For special occasions, feed frozen brine shrimp or blood worms.

- Check the ingredients of the pellets. The first three should be protein based. Experts say that protein in the pellets should be no less than 40%.
- Though live food may be exciting to watch, frozen and dried products are generally best. They are safer and free from potential parasites. Frozen or dried blood worms make for a great treat.

Feed your betta regularly

betta fish vary in eating habits from each other, so experiment to see how much food your betta eats. Set up routine feeding times, for example, once in the morning and once at night. If you stick to this routine, you may even find that your betta will be waiting for you when it's time to eat!

- Take care not to overfeed the fish. Overfeeding can be a problem in some betta fish, as they will eat as long as you feed them (which can be fatal). On the other hand, other betta fish will stop eating when they're full. Overfeeding can cause bloating, though this is not as serious as a similar condition referred to as dropsy. It can, however, cause bladder problems later on, which can also be fatal.

Make sure you clean up any extra food that your betta does not eat. Similarly, watch your betta to see if he/she spits up any food. This could be a sign that your betta is a picky eater, or it could also mean that the pellets are too big for the betta's mouth. Ironically, most big fish food companies don't realize that betta fish have smaller mouths than, say, goldfish or others.

- You can cut the pellets in half with a small razor blade or such to allow it to fit in the betta's mouth easier. If it still refuses to eat, try another brand of pellets or dried food.

Turn feeding time into a little enrichment exercise. Put a straw in the tank and watch your betta to see if he/she gets used to it. If he/she does, and you have leftover betta food he/she won't eat, place one of the leftover pellets in the tank. Place the straw over it so that it is

inside the straw. Hold the straw over the fish and wait for him/her to find it. After your betta finds it, he/she will follow it. You can then slowly lift the straw up to the top of the tank until the food pops out and your betta will eat it.

WHEN BETTA DOES NOT WANT TO EAT

When all is going well, betta fish eat a variety of foods and are generally willing to accept flake foods, frozen foods and especially live foods such as brine shrimp or bloodworm. Their eating habits are generally quite predictable and they will eat almost all of the food you put in their tank, providing you aren't over feeding them. However, sometimes it seems that betta fish don't want to eat at all and this can be the sign that something is wrong. Here are the main reasons why betta fish stop eating.

The first and most common reason is "over feeding" by the owner. When feeding a betta fish, you must only supply them with the amount of food that they are capable of consuming within two minutes, before removing any excess food after this time has elapsed. Not only will the uneaten food rot and cause a deterioration in your aquarium water quality, but fish are susceptible to bloating and swim bladder disease when they overeat. Feeding tropical fish with too much brine shrimp is often a cause of bloating. Aim to give your fish a starve day every week on which you do not feed it at all.

Try varying the foods you give your tropical fish so that it receives a range of nutrition. In this way you can also find out which foods are its favorite and which it generally isn't so impressed by.

If your betta fish isn't eating, you may be able to notice other symptoms which could indicate that it is suffering from another disease or illness. When your betta fish stops eating, you should inspect its body and fins for signs of fungal infection, white patches, scratch marks, uneven scales and a general lack of movement. All of these symptoms could suggest a more serious illness such as white spot or fin rot.

As a precautionary measure, you should test the water for ammonia and nitrates and perform a water change if these are present in your aquarium water. All tropical fish will be at a higher risk of illness and disease if your aquarium contains too much ammonia or nitrates/nitrites. If you manage to notice that your fish has a particular disease then be sure to isolate the affected fish and treat its water with the correct tropical fish disease treatment.

In conclusion, when your betta fish stops eating, follow the above steps, making sure you aren't overfeeding, using a variety of foods and keeping your aquarium tank clean. Failing all else you need to identify and treat its illness. Be prepared though, not all illnesses are treatable.

PLAY WITH YOUR BETTA

Have fun with your betta

Betta fish come to recognize their owners. They will actually learn faces and even simple games. Keep your betta company and say "hi" once in a while, so he learns who you are!

- betta fish are very curious and often develop a strong bond with their caretaker.

Play with your betta

Betta fish are enjoyable to watch and spend time with. You can play with your fish by moving your finger back and forth along the tank edge (never bang the tank or poke the water). Watch your betta follow you. And above all, don't forget to name your fish!

- Never tap the glass of the tank. This action easily agitates the fish and can cause the fish to go into shock and die. To interact through movement, simply slowly rest your finger on the glass and slide it along to see if your betta will follow it. If he/she backs away and seems frightened, then stop immediately. You can eventually try again once you the betta is more accustomed and less afraid of you.

Fun facts about betta fish

A few things that it's nice to know about betta fish:

- Betta fish are members of the Anabantoid family (gouramis are also in this family). They have a back-up breathing system that allows them to breathe surface air, however, they still require a filtration system in their tanks.
- Female betta fish are typically smaller than male betta fish. They lack the beautiful finnage that males possess. However, they can still be equally as beautiful in their own way—and feisty! Don't keep them together though, as the female may latch onto the male's vivid fins, causing them to tear.
- Male betta fish build bubble nests when happy!
- If a male likes a female, he flares his gills, twists his body, and spreads his fins. If a female likes a male, she wriggles back and front.

SORORITIES

Your first question might be, 'What exactly is a betta sorority?' In short, a 'sorority' is a group of female bettas housed together in the same tank.

A sorority is usually one of two things: a brilliant success, or a spectacular failure. There is more to a successful sorority than just putting a group of females in a tank together and expecting them to get along.

Below, I have outlined a important steps that should help you on your way and tilt the odds of success in your favor.

Any sorority tank should be a minimum of 10 gallons

Female bettas can be as aggressive and unpredictable as males. Domesticated bettas have been selectively bred for generations, and were never really intended to live peacefully with others of their species.

Therefore, it is important to provide each female with enough space to get away from an aggressor, and to lessen the event of territorial flare-ups.

I usually ensure each of my females has at least 1 gallon of space per fish. However, you may want to increase this minimum if you have particularly big or hostile females. Unless your females are very young and it is only a temporary solution, I would never recommend a sorority tank be anything less than 10 gallons.

Finally, an ideal sorority tank is one that is wider rather than taller. You will often find the more dominant females will spend most of their time near the surface and may bully the others when they come up to breathe or feed. Therefore, it is best to give your females enough room to spread out.

You should provide as much cover as possible

By blocking the line of sight from one end of the tank to the other, you can drastically lessen aggression and prevent chases from happening.

In a sparsely planted tank, there is nothing to prevent one female from chasing another around for as long as she wants. As you can imagine, this is obviously stressful for the fish being chased, and usually once the fish is caught, there is nowhere for her to escape from an attack.

Ideally I like to see most of the tank covered with either artificial or live plants. You want plants that provide cover at all levels of the tank. It is no use having lots of very short plants at the bottom, when your females are chasing and fighting up top!

I found my females rarely if ever went into hides such as terracotta caves or PVC pipe tunnels. Other people may have different experiences, but I have found the most favorite hiding places were in amongst the plants, particularly up near the surface.

You need a minimum of four-five females

A successful sorority is often one that is over rather than understocked. Indeed, you will find it very difficult to maintain long-term a sorority that has only 2-3 individuals. Generally the most dominant individual(s) will attack the weakest until she is either dead or extremely stressed.

To avoid this from happening, you want to have enough females that any aggression is dispersed rather than targeted at the weakest female. Some people are much more conservative with the stocking of their sororities, but I feel that the more females you have, the less prolonged aggression you will see.

If you cannot purchase or house any more than 2-3 females, I would advise against a sorority. It is only be a matter of time before you see the results of poor stocking, in the form of disease, injury and even death. An alternative solution in these instances is to either divide up a single tank, or house each female separately from the other.

It is best to choose the youngest females possible

Older, mature females that have lived alone are more inclined to react with extreme aggression when placed in a sorority environment. While most tend to adapt and become part of the community after an initial introduction period, some will continue to act aggressively and will need to be removed.

Younger females (siblings from the same spawn are often the best candidates for sororities particularly if they have yet to be separated) are usually much less territorial and aggressive. There is usually much less serious fighting between individuals while sorting out a hierarchy, and they tend to be much more flexible with the introduction of new tankmates.

However, one danger in choosing young females is that you will end up with a male plakats instead. This has happened to me once or twice, and for those without separate accommodations, can be quite the headache.

Females tend to have a rounder body shape than males, and in light coloured females, you should also be able to make out the ovaries as a small yellowish triangle behind the intestines. Male plakats will often have longer ventrals, a pronounced beard, possibly a fuller caudal, and generally a sharper angle to their anal fin. While they may not have a visible eggspot, it is not uncommon for younger males to have an ovipositor as well. Therefore, the presence of an eggspot alone is often not a good determinant of gender. The best advice I can give, is that if in doubt, don't purchase.

Ensure that your water parameters are nothing short of perfect

Living in even the most peaceful sorority environment is often quite stressful for a female betta. She must not only compete for food and for territory, but also must deal with the close proximity of equally territorial and aggressive fish.

Stress in fish is one of the number one causes for outbreaks of disease. While poor water quality may not kill your females outright, it can compromise their immune system, leaving them vulnerable to diseases a healthy fish may otherwise have managed to fight off.

In poor water conditions, when one female becomes sick it is usually quickly spread to every other female in the tank as well. This is why it is important to monitor your water parameters and ensure that they are always within an appropriate range. Any readings less than ideal demand an immediate water change and a look at the way the tank is being maintained.

Aggression in sororities

The question I often hear from most of those new to sororities is "What is too much aggression and when should I intervene?"

You have to remember when dealing with bettas, that aggression is a perfectly natural behavior. However, this does not mean that your sorority tank should look like a WWF wrestling match.

It is common for there to be some fighting when you first introduce your females. This could be anything from posturing, body slapping, flaring, chasing and biting. This usually settles down within a couple of days although it is perfectly normal to see occasional flare-ups.

For me, the time to intervene is when there is more than a couple of minutes of sustained fighting between two females in which obvious damage is being done. I separate out whoever looks to be the aggressor, and put them into a breeders' net that sits in my sorority tank. I find this is often the best method of introducing particularly aggressive females as by the end of the week, they are generally accustomed to the other females being nearby and less inclined to over react when reintroduced.

I also intervene if it is obvious one female is being continually bullied by the others. If a female is starting to lose a lot of condition, or has severe fin and scale damage it is time to pull her from the sorority. It can be difficult to understand why certain females are targeted by the others. Just because a female is small or less aggressive does not mean she will be the one bullied. Therefore, it is important with a sorority tank that you find the time each day to check on your females and see that everyone is in good physical shape. I speak from experience when I say it does not take long for things to suddenly fall apart.

BETTA FISH DISEASES AND TREATMENT

Water chemistry

Before you treat your fish for any disease, check the water chemistry. Toxic levels of Ammonia, Nitrites and Nitrates are extremely harmful and weaken your betta's immune system resulting in illness. Many petstores will test your water for free. Liquid tests are much more accurate than strip tests.

- If your fish look like they are lethargic, gasping for air or are swimming head down do a water change immediately because they probably have nitrate, nitrite, or ammonia poisoning. Do not use chemicals to remove them as they are ineffective. Prime does remove nitrites/nitrates but it is still most effective to do a water change.

- Extreme pH variation can also cause illness. Sand and porous rocks like sandstone or lava rock make water more basic (>7.0) while Indian almond leaves, peat moss and oak leaves make the water more acidic (<7.0).
- Are there chlorinates in the water? Did you forget to add the water conditioner? If so, quickly add your water conditioner!!
- Many issues can be cured by a simple water change so it should be the first thing you try.

Conservative treatment versus medication

There are two ways to treat a sick fish. One is the conservative route. It involves increased water changes and (usually) salt treatments. The other route is using medication. There are some illnesses that respond better to medication than water changes and salt, however most illnesses can be cured simply with a bit of TLC and salt. In general, you should always attempt conservative treatment methods before using medicines as medicines can be hard on your fish's internal organs and over using medicine or not completing the treatment cycle can result in the creation of medicine-resistance bugs.

Therapeutic additives

There are a number of things you can do for your betta to reduce stress and support their immune system. Indian Almond leaves, tannins, black water extracts, and peat moss pellets are all things that you can add to help prevent illness or help recovery. API Stress Coat and Kordon's Fish Protector are water conditioners/additives that help slime coat production and skin repair. They can be added at any time of signs of illness.

True fungal infections

Symptoms: White cottony like patches on its body or head, Lethargic, Not eating, Clamped Fins, Pale Colors.

Treatment: Conservative: Lower temperature below 76* F and treat with Aq.Salt at 1 tsp/gal. Increase water changes to 100% daily. Replace accurate amount of salt following water changes. Never continue salt treatments for more than 10 days. Medication: If Conservative treatment is ineffective after 10 days or you see the fungus spread rapidly during the course of conservative treatment, move to medication. Add "Fungus Eliminator" by Jungle, API Erythromycin, API Fungus Cure, API Triple Sulfa, OR Mardel's Maracyn II. Change water every day and add a new dose of the same medication. Continue until all fungus has disappeared.

Tail rot or fin rot

Symptoms: Betta's fins and/or tail seem to be getting shorter and shorter or they seem to be falling apart and dissolving, Black or red along the edge of the betta's fins/tail, Bloody tips, Behavior may not change.

Treatment: Conservative: Treat with Aq.Salt at 1 tsp/gal. Increase water changes to 100% daily. Replace accurate amount of salt following water changes. Add Stress Coat to help

repair tissue. If there is little to no improvement within the first 5 days, you can increase the salt dosage gradually to 2tsp/gal but do not continue any salt treatments past 10 days. Medication: If Conservative treatment is ineffective use API Tetracycline, API Fungus Cure, API Triple Sulfa, OR API Erythromycin. Also add Stress Coat to help regrowth. Continue until fins/tail stop receding and start showing some new growth.

Advanced fin and tail rot

Symptoms: Fins and or tail start rotting away, usually starting from the edge, but sometimes it starts at the base of the fin (especially dorsal) and attacks the body directly. Diseases progresses rapidly as the tissues are being eaten away. Once fins have been consumed, rot will proceed onto the body. At this stage the disease is hard to reverse although the betta might continue to live for months if treated properly. If not treated, it will die promptly.

Treatment: If the rot has advanced onto the body, skip conservative treatment. Do 100% daily water changes. Use a combination of Fungus Eliminator and Tetracycline. Continue until fins/tail stop receding and start showing some new growth. It may take up to 4 weeks to work, so don't give up.

Fin biting

Symptoms: Not to be confused with Fin/Tail Rot, Fin or Tail biting is when a betta bites his own tail, tearing off pieces. Fins will be ragged, they will look like there are chunks missing, Fin loss can occur overnight, The tips of the fins are clean, no black or red edging, You may spot him swimming in circles, chasing his tail, There may be no other behavioral change

Treatment: bettas bite their own tails out of boredom or misplaced aggression. To cure his boredom, try getting him a larger tank, move things around in the tank to spark his interest, put a mirror up to the tank a few times per day to let him exercise, offer a variety of foods, get him some tank mates (research into this first though), or put his tank next to another betta's tank ect... Owners of fin biters often have to deal with their tendency for a lifetime but do what you can to draw his attention from his fins. When your betta does have a fin biting episode, it is important to keep his water extra clean to prevent infection. You can treat him for a few days with Aquarium Salt until you see regrowth but you do not want to overuse it. Using Stress Coat as the water conditioner will help fin regrowth.

Ick

Symptoms: betta has white dots (looks like he was sprinkled with salt) all over his body and head, even eyes. Lethargic, No appetite, Clamped Fins, Might dart and scratching against decor

Treatment: You can treat Ick either conservatively or with medication. Ick is a parasite. Because ick is contagious, it is preferable to treat the whole tank when one fish is found to have it. Ick is temperature sensitive: Leave your betta in the community tank and raise temperature to 85 F. Then you can choose to treat with salt or medication. Conservative: Add 1 tsp/gal Aquarium Salt 3 times, 12 hours apart so that you end up with 3 times the normal concentration. Perform daily 100% water changes to remove fallen parasites before they can reproduce. Replace the water with the right amount of salt. Do not continue this treatment for more than 14 days. If it fails or you do not want to use salt, treat with Jungle's Parasite Clear, API Super Ick Cure, or Kordon Rid Ich Plus. If your betta lives in a jar/bowl, then it can be

difficult to heat the water. There are heaters for smaller containers, but you can also float the quarantine container in a larger heated tank during treatment. Do a full water change every day and add an appropriate amount of medication to the water.

Alternative Treatment: Personally, I have not found Ick medications very effective. I prefer to use PP to treat all external parasites. In the past, I have used 3 or 4 different ick medications unsuccessfully, and every time I resort to PP which works like a charm. Do lots of research before using PP as it is a more dangerous chemical than most.

Velvet

Symptoms: Can be found by shining a flashlight on your betta. If it looks like it is covered in fine gold or rust colored dust then it has velvet. Clamped Fins, no appetite, darting/rubbing, loss of color, lethargic.

Treatment: It is very contagious so you should treat the entire tank. Treat as you would treat Ick. PP is also my favorite for treating Velvet.

Popeye

Symptoms: One or both eyes will swell and bulge out. It in itself can also be a symptom of Dropsy.

Treatment: Usually not fatal if treated, but your betta might lose an eye. Conservative: If the swelling is extreme then use ES first. Perform 100% daily water changes. You may be able to treat the popeye with just Epsom and clean water. However, if the swelling goes down but the eyes remain cloudy/white, then switch to Aq.Salt at 1tsp/gal or use medications. Do not combine Aq.Salt with medications but you can continue to use ES during medical treatments. Medication: If ES or Aq.Salt do not do the trick or it is a serious case of popeye, then combine the ES with API Tetracycline, API Fungus Cure, API General Cure, API Triple Sulfa, OR Mardel's Maracyn.

Dropsy

Symptoms: Your betta will have a bloated belly and raised scales. They will look like a pine cone. This is usually a fatal disease caused by an internal bacterial infection resulting in internal organ failure but many have had success bringing fish back when treated quickly. Early Symptoms: Swollen eyes (important), Gray belly (important), Clamped fins, Lethargy. If your fish has swollen eyes and a gray belly, I suggest that you treat it for Dropsy.

Treatment: If you spot the early signs of Dropsy then treat him/her with ES at 1-2tsp/gal and Jungle's Anti-Parasite pellets while performing 100% daily water changes. It helps to increase the temperature to 84°F. If he/she has begun Pineconing then do the full course as described below:

Performing daily 100% water changes. Increase the temperature to 84°F. Add 1-2 tsp/gal Epsom Salt. Use API General Cure OR API Erythromycin OR Maracyn II and/or Maracyn for best results. Feed something containing Metronidazole, for example, Jungle's Anti-Parasite pellets. If caught early, Dropsy is curable.

Swim bladder disease

Symptoms: betta has trouble swimming, maybe he can't stay upright and can only swim on his side.

Treatment: This is not a contagious or fatal illness. If it isn't congenital (aka a condition that he/she has had since birth), then it is caused by over feeding or feeding the wrong foods. Bettas will typically recover after a day or two of Epsom Salt treatments (1-2tsp/gal) and fasting. You can help prevent a reoccurrence by switching to a better pellet food, feeding less and offering a more varied diet. To make it easier for the betta to eat and breath, you can make the water shallower. You can offer him/her frozen daphnia (sold at Petsmart) as daphnia will help him/her pass stool. Do not feed them peas.

External parasites

Symptoms: You may see parasites (other than ick) or you may not. Pay special attention to the area around the gills and fins. May dart and rub against decor, lose interest in food, lethargy, color loss

Treatment: Some parasites can be treated conservatively with Aquarium Salt. For salt treatments, treat as you would with Ick. If conservative treatment does not work or if you have extenuating circumstances then there are a number of medications you could use. API's General Cure and Jungle's Parasite Clear fizz tablets are both affective ways to kill parasites.

Alternative Medicines: I like PP for all stubborn external infections. It has never failed me, but it should only be used as a last resort.

Internal parasites

Symptoms: betta is losing weight but eating normally and acting lethargic. He/she might dart or rub against decor.

Treatment: These can be hard to fight and can get confused with the fatal disease Tuberculosis. Perform daily 100% water changes (if possible, for larger aquariums change 3/4). Make sure you carefully clean the gravel to remove eggs/larva. Aq.Salt does not seem to be affective against internal parasites. I find combining ES with an anti-parasite med is best. Treat with 1-2tsp/gal Epsom Salt combined with either Jungle's Anti-Parasite Pellets, Jungle's Parasite Clear Fizz tabs or API General Cure. PP is also effective against internal parasites.

Bacterial infection/open red sores

Symptoms: betta has open red sores or red patches (that aren't ammonia burns), lethargy, no appetite, clamped, sits at bottom or top, color loss.

Treatment: Perform daily 100% water changes and clean the gravel thoroughly (at least 3/4 water change for larger tanks). Treat the entire tank. Treat conservatively with Aq.Salt at 1-2tsp/gal but do not continue for more than 10 days. If that fails, use API Tetracycline, API Erythromycin, API Triple Sulfa OR Mardel's Maracyn I & II. PP is also effective.

Tuberculosis

Symptoms: Fish will start acting sick for no apparent reason. They could just die. Symptoms include weight loss, lethargy, open sores, deformities (scoliosis, bent spine), raised scales, fin and tail rot, gray lesions, and many others. Generally, if your fish are dying in large amounts everyday, it is probably TB. BEWARE HUMANS CAN CONTRACT TUBERCULOSIS FROM FISH, IT IS A POTENTIALLY DEADLY DISEASE.

Treatment: There is no known cure, it will generally kill all fish that come in contact with it. It is highly contagious. Bleach does not kill it so throw away all supplies...

Inflamed gills

Symptoms: One or both gills will not close all the way and may appear red. The fish will be gasping for air and subsequently die.

Treatment: Isolate sick fish. Depending on the cause, there are different treatments. If it is genetic then there is no cure. If it was caused by nitrate/nitrite/ammonia poisoning (BAD HUSBANDRY) then treat with 1tsp/gal Aq.Salt and Stress Coat while performing daily 100% water changes. If it is a bacterial infection, then you can treat conservatively with 1-2tsp/gal Aq.Salt for up to 10 days. If that does not work then use API Tetracycline, API Erythromycin, API Triple Sulfa, OR Maracyn.

Septicemia (red streaks)

Symptoms: Bloody red streaks across the body and/or fins, lethargic, loss of appetite, clamped, gasping for air, bloated, ulcers.

Treatment: Septicemia is caused by an internal bacterial infection. From what I've read, it can be due to compromised digestion as a result of rapid drops in temperature. Since Nitrite poisoning can also cause red streaks, check for that first. I do not know if it can be treated conservatively as I have never tried. Though it is not contagious, isolate sick fish. Perform daily 100% water changes. Treat with API Tetracycline, API Erythromycin, Mardel's Maracyn II OR Jungle's Fungus Clear/Eliminator. If you are treating with something that does not contain Metronidazole then combine the treatment with Jungle's Anti-Parasite pellets. During treatment, use 1tsp/gal Aq.Salt and Stress Coat (as directed on bottle) to help prevent secondary infections.

Body slime infection

Symptoms: Your betta is covered in a white film. It may just be in a few areas and may rise of the skin a bit. Lethargy, clamped, loss of appetite, may have cloudy eyes.

Treatment: Body Slime infections or Slime Coat Sloughing are due to bacterial infections. Perform daily 100% water changes. Use 1tsp/gal Aq.Salt for up to 10 days. If that does not work then use API Tetracycline, API Fungus Cure, API Triple Sulfa, OR Jungle's Lifeguard.

Columnaris

Symptoms: White spots on mouth, edges of scales and fins, Cottony Growth that eats away at the mouth, Fins rapidly disintegrate, starting at the edges

Gray areas around head and gills, As the disease progresses the gray lesions may change in color to yellow/brown/red, Lesions often occur in front of the dorsal causing a “saddleback” appearance, Lethargic, Loss of appetite, Clamped, Gasping for air

Treatment: There are 2 versions of Columnaris: chronic and acute. Chronic Columnaris can take days to progress while acute can kill within a day. It is contagious so isolate sick fish. If more than one fish shows symptoms then treat the entire tank. Perform daily 100% water change in small tanks or ¾ water change in larger tanks. Make sure to clean the gravel. Treat with Aq.Salt: add 1 tsp/gal Aquarium Salt 3 times, 12 hours apart so that you end up with 3 times the normal concentration. Do NOT raise the temperature as it thrives in temps over 85°F, however, lowering the temperature does not seem to help fight it. Combine salt treatment with Mardel's Coppertite, Maracyn I & II, API Erythromycin, OR API Triple Sulfa, combined with Jungle's Fungus Eliminator (if possible).

Hole in the head disease

Symptoms: lesions (holes) will appear around the head area, Lethargy, Loss of appetite

Treatment: HITH can be treated conservatively with Aquarium salt. Add 1 tsp/gal Aquarium Salt 3 times, 12 hours apart so that you end up with 3 times the normal concentration and remember not to continue this for more than 10 days. Keep the temperature between 80-82°F and perform daily 100% water changes. If conservative treatment fails then use API General Cure OR Jungle's Parasite Clear fizz tablets.

Stress

Symptoms: It's hard to say for sure. But maybe your betta is lethargic, not eating, hiding, staying in a corner or at the bottom of the tank, he might look a bit pale or dart away when you get close to the tank. It could be a mild infection of some sort though too so be careful.

Treatment/Prevention: If your betta is housed with other fish then isolate him and see if he gets better. His tank mates might be harassing him. On the other hand, some bettas become depressed when isolated. Other causes could be too much or too little light, too much current, too much activity near the tank, the temperature might be too low. Try changing things up, move the aquarium to a more isolated area and see if he gets better. Or if he's on a food strike, offer live foods. If he is lonely, place the tank where he can see other fish. Make sure there are places to hide when he is stressed.

Costia

Symptoms Symptoms: 8-15micrometer long flagellates may be visible. Affected fish may do swinging movements, scratch against decor, stop eating, have labored breathing, have bluish-grayish slime coating, clamped fins, red tints on body, may have fin disintegration, gills may be covered in mucous and anemic.

Treatment: Remove all fish from tank. Treat fish with Aquarium Salt baths: Use 2.5 tablespoon/gal for 10-15 minutes then place fish in clean water for 10 minutes then move it

into the hospital tank. If fish becomes obviously stressed then remove it from the salt bath quickly. Do this daily for 3 days. Use 2tsp/gal in the hospital tank to prevent secondary infection and perform daily 100% water changes. Sterilizing the tank: Costia cannot survive at temps above 86°F so increase the temp of the main tank to 88°-90°F for 48 hours. The parasites will die due to both the temperature and lack of host and it will be safe to reintroduce your fish as long as they have finished treatment. Another option is treatment with once daily Potassium Permanganate Baths (RESEARCH THIS THOROUGHLY AND PM ME) for 5 days with 2tsp/gal Aquarium Salt in the hospital tank to prevent secondary infections. Quarantining new fish and plants will help prevent infestations.

Red-sore disease

Also known as: Aeromonas hydrophila, Motile Aeromonas Septicemia, Ulcer Disease and it is really the later stages of Hemorrhagic Septicemia. This disease is "different" from Hemorrhagic Septicemia in that the fish will have ulcers. The pictures are pretty gruesome so you can look it up if you are so inclined...

Symptoms: Fish are lethargic, lay on the bottom, refuse food, may bloat, scales may raise (dropsy) or shed, and fish will develop red blotches that eventually turn into ulcers with white edges and a red center.

Treatment: Since it can be the later stages of Hemorrhagic Septicemia, it is often fatal unless you begin treating immediately after you see the ulcer. Though the ulcer is external, it is an internal gram-negative bacterial infection so medication is necessary. Feed an anti-bacterial medication such as Kanamycin, Furazolidone or Nitrofurazone. Specialty stores often sell the as pre-medicated flakes and they are available on Aquabid. Use 2tsp/gal Aquarium Salt in the water to prevent secondary infection and perform daily 100% water changes. It is usually caused by poor water conditions so keep your tanks clean.

Congratulations! You now know everything you need to know about your betta fish friend!